

DRAFT MINUTES
GROTON HEIGHTS SCHOOL REUSE TASK FORCE
SPECIAL MEETING
CITY MUNICIPAL BUILDING, CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS

November 8, 2010

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The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Chair Catherine Kolnaski.

I. ROLL CALL

Members present were Janet Downs, Bill Hart, Marian Galbraith, Peter Ganacoplos, Mary Kelly, Catherine Kolnaski, Dana Parfitt, Archie Swindell, and Ralph Whitney. A quorum of members was present.

Absent was Bob Peruzzotti.

Also present were Public Works Director Gary Schneider and Project Management Specialist Holly Bridgham.

II. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

This item was addressed later in the meeting.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF October 25, 2010

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Mr. Ganacoplos, seconded by Ms. Downs and so voted unanimously.

IV. ITEMS OF BUSINESS

1. Review of Building and Site Analysis

Mr. Schneider answered members' questions about the cost of oil and utilities, square footage, the electrical system, bathrooms, roof leaks, the general condition of the building, and the possibility of providing handicapped access. He will check on what modifications are necessary to bring the building up to code. The members discussed possible problems that may arise from the fact that the building was deeded to the Town "for educational purposes." Also discussed was the possibility that the area in front of the building might be split into building lots. City zoning requirements for "flag lots" were discussed, but there was uncertainty as to what those requirements are.

2. Identification of Potential Reuses

Members suggested various uses for the property, including

- Town/City uses
- Corporate uses (meeting rooms, displays, presentations) by EB, Pfizer, SubBase
- Visitors' center
- Non-profit uses by Boys & Girls Clubs and others
- Educational uses by magnet or charter schools or universities
- State uses (extension of Monument House Museum)
- Residential uses (development as apartments or condominiums)
- Business/medical uses (doctor's offices)
- Mixed uses

The possibility of the Town retaining ownership and leasing out space was discussed. It was noted that the State should probably be contacted to determine whether they would have an interest in acquiring the property, although concern was expressed about the ability of the State or non-profits to restore and maintain the building.

3. City Zoning Considerations

Zoning issues were discussed; it was noted that most uses would require either a special permit or a variance. A copy of Sections 2.41 and 2.42 of the City Zoning Regulations (R-5.2 Permitted Uses and Special Permit Uses) was distributed by Ms. Kelly who also serves on the City Planning & Zoning Commission.

4. Other

Members discussed how to determine what individuals or organizations may have an interest in the property.

Possible contacts cited were:

- Association of Realtors
- Chamber of Commerce
- Groton Business Association
- Contractors/developers (as identified by the Town Manager as having expressed interest)
- State of CT Economic Development
- Town of Groton Economic Development
- Project LEARN

Also discussed was the possibility of either a press release or a public survey to solicit ideas for uses for the property. Ms. Galbraith noted that a survey may be able to utilize the same account as the survey for the Thames Street rehabilitation project.

Suggestions for next week's meeting agenda included identification of questions to include on a possible survey; evaluation and refinement of the committee's list of possible uses; identification by the Town Manager of parties who have expressed interest in the property; identification of individuals or organizations to bring in to present ideas for use of the property.

The committee recognized Mike Zieminski, 121 Mitchell Street, who noted that he would prefer that the Groton Heights property be used for a public purpose, preferably a school. He cited the property's location among other public buildings, adding that private use would change the character of the neighborhood. Mr. Zieminski cautioned the committee against issuing any notice resembling a request for proposals.

V. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Hart, seconded by Ms. Kelly and so voted unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Submitted by

Janet Downs, Task Force member